



# READING THE LANDSCAPE

## A CONSCIOUS ARTIST'S CHECKLIST

### A GUIDE TO APPRECIATING AND RESPONSIBLY INTERACTING WITH OUR DESERTS



**The desert landscape is an intricate work of art.** With sweeping sand dunes and endless horizon lines, the desert may seem like a blank canvas; but it is actually a rich landscape teeming with life that has adapted to the unique climate over millions of years. The more people who discover the wonder of the California Desert, the more it will be used as a platform for creative expression. Artists have long played a role in telling the story of the Mojave - but in telling one story, we must ensure we are not ending another.

The Mojave Desert Land Trust is partnering with the Joshua Treenial to launch **Reading the Landscape**, a set of guidelines to help artists make informed decisions about engaging with this land and its delicate ecosystems. These tips are a resource to advise artists throughout their creative processes, to ensure that each step is done in a way that will preserve the landscapes for future generations. If you have additional questions about an art project you are considering, please feel free to reach out to the Mojave Desert Land Trust at 760-366-5440 or [www.mdlt.org](http://www.mdlt.org) for more information.

**KNOW BEFORE YOU GO**  
**CREATING ON-SITE**  
**RETURN, REFLECT, RESTORE**  
**DESERT SAFETY BASICS**  
**TREAD LIGHTLY GUIDE**  
**LEAVE NO TRACE GUIDE**

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WORKING TOGETHER WITH:



# KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- **Research** who owns the land prior to site visit, as well as how to access the land through legal routes with an appropriate vehicle.

- **The Bureau of Land Management (BLM)** manages 15.2 million acres in California. Review BLM California's Know Before You Go page:

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/know-before-you-go>

- **For clarification on administrative boundaries of the BLM**, please visit BLM's interactive administration boundaries map and zoom in on the southern California desert:

<https://blm-egis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=6f0da4c7931440a8a80bfe20eddd7550>

- **Check local weather conditions** for the duration of your project, with special consideration for summer heat, wind, rain, and flash floods that may impair site access.

- **Review the rules and regulations** of the land management agency specific to your project.

- **Obtain a commercial permit**, when appropriate.

- **If you intend to create art within Joshua Tree National Park's boundaries**, determine if your project requires a **Special Use Permit**. Special Use Permits are required for: ceremonies, First Amendment activities, cultural programs, and public spectator attractions. Commercial filming or photography also requires a filming permit, but permits are not required for news crews or visitors photographing for personal use. See more about Special Use Permits here:

<https://www.nps.gov/jotr/planyourvisit/permitsandreservations.htm>

- **Special Recreation Permits** (including authorizations for commercial use) are required on certain BLM lands. Learn more here:

<https://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/permits-and-passes/special-recreation-permits>

- **Consider** contacting the local conservation organization to provide you with a guide.

- **Pack appropriately.** Water, sunscreen, a shade hat and sturdy walking shoes are a few of the obvious items – but will you remember your flashlight and a long sleeved shirt? Use our handy Desert Pack List to make sure you don't forget anything important!

## DESERT PACK LIST

ITEM	QUANTITY
Sense of Adventure	1 per person
Sunglasses	1 per person
Sunscreen	1 bottle
Lip Balm with SPF	1 per person
Long Sleeve Shirt	1 per person
Sturdy Walking/Hiking Shoes	2 per person
Salty Snacks	lots
Water Bottle: 2 liters or 1/2 gallon	1 per person
A map of the area	1
A sweater	1 per person
Cash	enough
Shade Hat	1 per person
Flashlight	1

# YOU

## DESERT PACK LIST

ITEM	QUANTITY
Water	1 gallon
Gas	full tank
Junper Cables	1 set
Tire Pump	1
Spare Tire	1
Flashlight	1
Printed Road Map	1
Info about local services	lots
Info about current conditions	lots
1 packed meal, per passenger	4
Blanket	1
Rope	10'
First Aid Kit	1

# CAR

# CREATING ON-SITE

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- **Inform** neighboring residents and community of your intended project, including duration and intent.
- **Ensure** the site is not in a desert wash, where loose sands can cause art to be swept away in wind or rain.
- **Avoid** using heavy machinery or vehicles that might trample vegetation, degrade soil, and disturb wildlife.
- **Identify** and avoid on-site cultural resources, historic debris, and wildlife burrows. **For example:** A desert tortoise burrow entrance looks like the letter “D” lying on its side. Desert tortoises are listed as “Threatened” under the Endangered Species Act. Burrows can be found almost anywhere: out in the open, tucked under vegetation, under a fallen Joshua Tree, etc. Give them space!



- **Interested in learning more about desert wildlife burrows?** Consider purchasing the quirky, popular field guide, *A Field Guide To Desert Holes*:

[http://www.desertmuseum.org/books/book\\_detail.php?press\\_id=14](http://www.desertmuseum.org/books/book_detail.php?press_id=14)

- **Wildlife** may seek shade under vehicles or be drawn to water dripping from engines. Please check under your vehicle before driving away from a desert site.
- **Create appropriate pathways**, access points, and visitor parking.
- **Existing disturbed areas** should be used for your project whenever possible.
- **Set up appropriate visitor services**, including bathroom facilities when appropriate.
- **Plan** to protect and anchor art in case of strong winds or floods.
- **Educate visitors** about the site and the desert-conscious principles in practice.
- **Dispose of liquid waste properly** – if you wouldn’t drink it, don’t dump it on the land!
- **If you plan on painting on-site**, consider reviewing Leave No Trace for the Outside Artist:

<https://lnt.org/blog/leave-no-trace-outdoor-artist>

- **Avoid** painting or sculpting directly onto natural material, including rocks, soil, or vegetation.

- **Be aware of fire hazards**, including electric cords & chemicals with prolonged exposure to elements.

- **There is a term for the “trace” that’s left behind:** MOOP, which stands for “Matter Out Of Place.” Designing your project to be MOOP-proof is the best way to Leave No Trace and give yourself peace of mind. Some materials you should think carefully about before using:

- Feathers, paper, cardboard, foam and other lightweight materials that may blow away easily, degrade in the rain, or crumble with visitor interaction.
- Glass, which breaks easily into tiny bits that are difficult to clean up.
- Paint that doesn’t land on your project, gets on a participant who then tracks it around the desert, or spills in transit.

- **Pack it in, pack it out!** Anything your project leaves behind in the desert after deinstall is MOOP. If your project generates waste or if your project is designed to be thrown out after the event, consider how you might reduce or eliminate that waste.

- **If your project is designed** to attract and hold many people who stick around for a while, expect them to leave MOOP behind.

- **Review** Burning Man’s Leave No Trace for Artist’s Clean Up Tools page for tips for desert-appropriate clean-up tools and methods. We recommend you have proper tools handy in which to put MOOP that accumulates around your project during install, the event, and deinstall:

<http://burningman.org/event/art-performance/playa-art/leave-no-trace-for-artists/2/>

- **When you’re installing or deinstalling your project**, sometimes it’s easier to toss parts like nails or bolts on the ground and pick them up later. But that makes them harder to find later, especially in the sand. Put down a tarp or have a bucket ready if you have small parts to collect.

- **Work around on-site wildlife and plant life.**

- **If your project includes** creating holes or pits of any kind in the ground, please consider covering the opening when no one is around. Open pits are hazardous to wildlife. Even a 1’ fall is enough to kill, injure, or trap an animal.

- **Tread lightly and travel responsibly!** View the Tread Lightly Guidelines on Page 4 or visit the Tread Lightly website for more:

<https://www.treadlightly.org>

# RETURN, REFLECT, RESTORE

- **Work with a local conservation non-profit** to develop a restoration plan for removal of debris on-site and on adjacent land.



- **If your project removed vegetation**, consider participating in a scheduled community clean-up or stewardship day with a local conservation organization.
- **Leave what you find**, including rocks, vegetation, animals, bones, and historical trash.
- **Take what you brought**, including debris, chemicals, equipment, and liquids.
- **Leave No Trace** offers guidelines for protecting the outdoors by teaching people to enjoy it responsibly. View the Leave No Trace Guidelines on Page 5 or visit:

<https://www.LNT.org>

## DESERT SAFETY BASICS

- **Travel with plenty of water.** Don't assume you can find drinks on your trip! One gallon of water per person, per day is the absolute minimum that should be carried.
- **Always tell someone where you are going and when you will return.**
- **Always start with a full tank of gas.** Fill up when you pass a station, even if you still have plenty of fuel. It may be a long distance to the next open station.
- **In summer**, layered clothing slows dehydration and minimizes exposure. Good hiking shoes, loose fitting natural-fiber clothing, a wide brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen are a must.
- **In winter**, temperatures can often drop below freezing with icy winds. Bring extra warm clothing.

- **Watch the sky.** Flash floods may occur any time thunderheads are in sight. Weather can change in the desert quite rapidly. Do not remain in dry washes (arroyos) which can flood suddenly.



- **Cellphone reception** can be spotty to nonexistent. Don't rely on your phone or GPS maps to navigate.

- **Always carry an up-to-date printed map** of the area before exploring by foot or vehicle. USGS topographic maps show land contours and specific features. Find the right map:

[https://store.usgs.gov/b2c\\_usgs/b2c/start/\(xcm=r3standardpitrex\\_prd\)/.do](https://store.usgs.gov/b2c_usgs/b2c/start/(xcm=r3standardpitrex_prd)/.do)

- **Think before you leave paved roads!** If an incident occurs on a remote road, it can be a long time until help arrives.
- **Two-wheel drive vehicles** are generally ok, but 4WD can be required. Check conditions of dirt roads before venturing to a remote location. Roads may become impassable in bad weather or from past storms. Be safe and drive with care.
- **Be prepared for emergencies** with adequate first aid supplies, including proper medication for anyone who requires it.

- **Read more** about desert safety here:

[http://www.desertusa.com/thingstodo/du\\_safetytips.html](http://www.desertusa.com/thingstodo/du_safetytips.html)

- **For a display of the power of flash floods** in the desert consider watching this youtube video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgEf0pkxGM>

- **Or** watch the making of a flash flood in Ocotillo, California:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DwMYexdMloE>



### INFORMATION DISCLAIMER

The general information here has been simplified and is intended as a basic guide only. While every effort has been made to ensure that information is accurate and up-to-date, Reading The Landscape and Mojave Desert Land Trust cannot guarantee accuracy and are not responsible for any errors or omissions, nor are liable for any damages whatsoever in connection with the use of this guide.



## TREAD LIGHTLY INFORMATION

**treadlightly!**<sup>®</sup>

ON LAND AND WATER



### Travel Responsibly

- Stay on designated roads, trails and areas
- Go over, not around, obstacles to avoid widening trails
- Cross streams only at designated crossings
- When possible, avoid wet, muddy trails
- On water, stay in designated waterways
- Launch watercraft in designated areas

### Respect the Rights of Others

- Respect private property owners and other recreationists
- Leave gates as you found them
- Yield right-of-way to those passing you or going uphill
- On water, respect anglers, swimmers, skiers, boaters, divers and those on or near shore

### Educate Yourself Before You Go

- Plan for your trip
- Obtain travel maps and area regulations from public land management agencies
- Know how to operate your equipment safely
- Attend an OHV safety course and a Tread Lightly! ethics course

### Avoid Sensitive Areas

- Such as meadows, lakeshores, wetlands
- Stay on designated routes
- Protect wildlife habitat and sensitive soils from damage
- Don't disturb historical, archaeological or paleontological sites
- On water, avoid operating your watercraft in shallow waters or near shorelines at high speeds

### Do Your Part

- Model appropriate responsible behavior
- Leave an area better than you found it
- Properly dispose of waste
- Minimize the use of fire
- Avoid the spread of invasive species

(800) 966-9900

[www.treadlightly.org](http://www.treadlightly.org)



**RIDE ON  
DESIGNATED ROUTES**



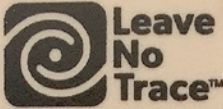
**RESPECTED  
IS OPEN ACCESS**



# READING THE LANDSCAPE

## A CONSCIOUS ARTIST'S CHECKLIST

### LEAVE NO TRACE INFORMATION



Leave No Trace™

#### LEAVE NO TRACE

#### Outdoor Ethics

##### PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups. Split larger parties into smaller groups.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of rock cairns, flagging or marking paint.

##### TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
  - Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes, streams.
  - Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.
- In popular areas*
- Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
  - Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
  - Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- In pristine areas*
- Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
  - Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

##### DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter. Burning trash is never recommended.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep at least 200 feet from water, camp, and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

##### LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

- Preserve the past: observe, but do not touch, cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

##### MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS

- Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the environment. Use a light-weight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Use only sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

##### RESPECT WILDLIFE

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing rations and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

##### BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

For more information and materials:

1.800.332.4100 • [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org)

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